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PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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## MORAL STANDARDS.

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“For he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.” “Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”—ROM., xiii., 8-10.

“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”—GAL. v., 14.

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I am not going to preach a sermon on the subject of Love; but I am going to employ these declarations for the elucidation of the philosophy of moral standards of conduct.

I read in your hearing, from Leviticus, a chapter in which love was as clearly and strongly enjoined toward one's own countrymen and toward the strangers also that were living among them, as it was by the lips of our Saviour himself. Neither in that remote declaration and origin, I may say, of the New Testament command, nor in the use of that command by the Saviour, and by his apostles after him, are we to understand that he enjoins the specific love which springs in a sentient being from the perception of excellence and of beauty. We are to understand that it is a larger feeling; that it is that state of mind which recognizes in all men a reason for wishing them well, and breathes out a sympathizing desire for their welfare.

This larger feeling includes the whole race, and it has in it no respect whatever to moral character. Men who are good will of course come under its jurisdiction; and men who are bad all the more, because they are more necessitous. It is that great mother-love that is enjoined upon every human creature in looking upon his neighbor, of high degree or low degree, rich or poor, good or bad, and whether offending him, injuring him or not, without regard to anything except



this : that the nature and state of every man's soul should be such that to every human being his strong feeling should be good will, and the desire—real, genuine, deep and earnest—for the happiness and welfare of every living human creature.

That is the grandeur of the moral law. Out of that springs the love of those who are artistic for the artist ; the love of those who are humble for the humble ; the love of the good for the good. All the specifics under it are admirable, and they all flow from this generic disposition.

Now this is the disposition that must precede any right conception of moral standards, and that must facilitate and direct the application of moral standards to conduct, to character, to one's self, to one's beliefs, everywhere. Every part of human life has a moral relation ; and, in a large and just sense, all conduct is moral conduct. Even in the lowest conditions of life, and in the earliest developments of the race, men employ moral standards, both before and after every course of conduct. Men think, "What may I do ? and, what may I not ?" The Bushman thinks of it. His light is small, his standard is poor, the sphere of his life is limited : nevertheless, in that sphere, and in those conditions, he asks, "What may I, and what must I not, do ?" Though the sense of moral obligation may be wrongly founded, though it may be conceived of in an exceedingly imperfect manner, the germ, the root-feeling, of obligation is there. And we find that, after the lowest men have gone through a course of action, especially if they are in any way impeded or threatened or harmed by reason of it, they use a kind of moral standard—each sort, each nation, each stage of development having its own kind, but all having a moral standard by which they determine whether things which they have done are right or wrong. So, in the lowest states of human development there is a rudimentary moral standard by which men measure the things that lie before them, to ascertain whether they may attempt them ; or the things that lie behind them, and whether they are culpable or praiseworthy for what they have done.

No matter how erroneous, no matter how imperfect, the standard may be—that is not the question ; it is simply that there is such a standard, and that by their very organization,

as soon as men come to act together in society relations, there grows up among them a more or less perfect moral standard, which, while they may not recognize it, they always use.

Civilization, in making more of such men, makes more of society; and the making more of the individual and of the social whole complicates spheres and relations, so that men, as society advances, find themselves acting in more and more spheres; and in each one of those spheres comes up again this standard of right and wrong. It is not thought of as we now are analytically considering it; but still, wherever a man acts, in all his relations to life, there is acting with him incessantly a sense of right or wrong—which is a moral standard. There must be some rule by which to judge of what is right and what is wrong; and the standard becomes extremely complicated, and too large, ordinarily, for any single man to carry—so large that it cannot be held and applied by one man in ten thousand. Not Whewell, not Fichte, not Paley, not Wayland, not any of the great moral writers seems to have been able to gather up the sum total of society, with all its infinite divisions and circles and spheres, where men act, and where there is a constant modification of the rules of action, and to hold them all before the mind so as to remember them and discriminate and state them. It is encyclopedic. The circuit of civilized human life is so large, the spheres and sub-spheres of it are so innumerable, the modifications of right and wrong are so many, that it transcends the ordinary power of the human understanding to take a comprehensive and continuous view of them.

Let us enumerate some of the intersphering relations of life. For instance, the child has the first consciousness of duty as it relates to his obligations to his father and mother and brothers and sisters in the family; but if he is brought up right he has something to do—at least, if he is brought up in New England, or according to the New England method.

As early as when I was six or seven years old, the barn was a part of my sphere of duty. I had a relation to the horse, to the cow, to the pigs, and to the chickens; and in the spring I had a relation to the garden, and to a great deal of outdoor work: so that I was conscious that there was a

difference of relation between my doing right and wrong in the house to my father and mother and the children about me, and in the sphere of operative industry and supervision outside of the house. Thus I began to have an industrial sphere joined to the primary, home, social sphere.

But soon (alas!) I went to school; and I felt that there was another section added to my life. I had duties at home, I had industrial duties around about me, and I had duties in school. I was conscious that things which I did in the barn I could not do in the house. I never reasoned as to why this was, but there was in me the sense that the things which were proper in any one of those spheres were not proper in the others—that the things which belonged to the school did not belong to either of the other spheres. I felt that there were three spheres in which I was acting. And every person is conscious of the same thing. Men everywhere have a growing sense of the complexity of the relations of life.

A man enters a sphere wider and more various than that of the family—namely, the sphere of the neighborhood. While he is under ten years old, the neighborhood to him consists of the boys about him that are nearly his own age. His ideas are, comparatively speaking, nascent and crude; but there is a boy public sentiment, if the neighborhood be at all populous, as in cities and large towns. Therefore another line of duty is added to those which he recognized before. He feels that there is a home duty, a chore duty, a school duty, and a companionship duty. These various duties do not change as time goes on—that is, they do not change in the direction of being lost in any part; but they multiply. For, very soon he comes into business relations of life, and at once finds that business also has different rules and regulations for which there is to be a standard applied somewhere. Not only that, he finds that each kind of business is separated from every other. The lawyer does things that the physician does not do, and could not do. The merchant does things that do not belong to the sphere of the mechanic. They not only perform different functions, but, by reason of the difference of these functions, there are some modifications of the rules of right and wrong.



Then, aside from these things, men have a consciousness of a relation to the State. That relation is generic. It takes on the relation to the parties through which they show their allegiance to the State, and it takes on their relation to the administration of public affairs. This is a still larger sphere.

Now, all these spheres are grouped together, and man is passing into them and out of them, and acting complexly in them continually, with a general sense that there are special rules for this and for that; that there are standards here and standards there; and these standards multiply as he goes up. This shows the divine method of the education of men.

A man, when he has gone through these various stages, and entered the different spheres which I have enumerated, where there exists a multiplicity of standards, is as different from what he was at first as the oak tree is from the acorn out of which it sprang, after it has gone through the processes of growth which belong to its nature,—opening up, expanding, splitting, widening and becoming more and more complex.

The savage, living in the lowest state, has few occupations and few relations, and cannot be large in his moral nature; but in proportion as you begin to put him into domestic and industrial and civil relations his nature grows, he is obliged to think more, and to deal with complex questions; and, above all, there is brought to bear upon him that incessant rule of life obedience to which brings prosperity and happiness, and disobedience to which brings punishment and unhappiness.

So life itself is a grand educating academy. Social life is a method above and including all other methods, by which God trains, drills and educates men in the knowledge of moral relations.

Now, so many are the spheres of life, and so many are the questions that arise in them with regard to right or wrong, that, as I have already intimated, it is hardly possible for men to take the whole of these things into their minds—and they do not. They are obliged to have auxiliaries or helps; and the first element of help which they receive is home teaching and home-bred habits and tendencies. Children do

not know what is right and wrong except as they have the injunctions, "You must," and "You must not," and observe them until they become accustomed to the observance of them. Children do not do right at first by intelligence and afterwards by moral likings. It is training that radicates the child first in the sense of right and wrong. By practicing this rule the child forms it into a habit, and that is training. The foundation of our character is laid in the family by instruction and training.

A great many persons throw it up to young men, when they go out in life, as one of the fleers of skepticism, "You got all those notions from your mother and your nurse." I should like to know where I got the milk that supported me but from my mother! I should like to know what I was except what she made me! I should like to know what there was of me, or could have been, but for her! Of course it is a sneer against the fundamental law of nature. This is the condition on which alone the first step can be taken. It is contrary to natural laws that a child should learn at first in any other way than by the arbitrary dicta of father and mother. That is the foundation. Afterwards, by knowledge and discretion, they may modify or change it; but this is the primary step, and it goes a great way down in life. With many persons, where they have had the advantage of teachers, wise, intelligent, and endowed with deep moral feeling, it goes to the end of life. There are multitudes of men who, when they have departed from the more direct course which swept them out into the world, and have come under influences which biased their judgment and weakened their faith—there are multitudes of such men who have abandoned, under the stress of pleasure, or in the fiery heats of ambition, the instructions of the venerated father, or of the beloved and revered mother; and long afterwards, far down in life, they are brought back again, not by philosophy, nor by fiction, but by the revival of those early influences and trainings which made them what they were in their childhood.

There is nothing that is not changeable. But there is nothing in man that can so little bear mutation as his early instruction; and there is nothing so unworthy of a free



thinking man as to be ashamed that he got his notions and his faith from his father and mother : for, to a child that is under age, father and mother stand for God.

Next, the social customs in which a man finds himself become his standard, and to a certain extent *must* become his standard. A man is not competent to grow up by himself independently of others. Persons say to people, "Why do you not use your independent judgment? Why do you follow the fashions and customs?" There is a very limited amount of reason in that at certain times ; but the great law is this : that that which the race has found out by successive experiments, and which has embodied itself in social customs and usages, has in it the presumption of right, though it is not always right.

The social conditions of men, therefore, represent the facts, the experiences, the findings-out which belong to human life. The custom-law of social life is in some sense a historic record of what millions and millions of men through thousands and thousands of ages have discovered ; and it is not to be treated with contempt. It is a part of the moral standard by which men regulate their lives.

When men come into business they find distributed through it rules which they could not have excogitated. They are to adapt themselves now to new functions, and to new relations to their fellow-men ; and it is indispensable that there should be provided for them some standard of right and wrong. There is a certain custom of business—a particular custom for each particular kind of business ; and they accept it. It may not be high enough ; it may be very imperfect ; but the necessity of having an established custom in every business by which men can judge of what is right and what is wrong is indispensable.

The same is true of civil regulations. They tie up or they loose a hundred strings : and what men may do in their relations to the State ; or in their relations to the laws that regulate the welfare of the whole, rather than of single sections ; or in their relations to institutions, and to the various elements which constitute civil organization,—this is predetermined. I never pay taxes because I have reasoned

on the subject, and said to myself, "The commonwealth has certain great ends which relate to all, and all are therefore bound to pay their quota for its maintenance, because they have their dividend of its blessings." Some men think of this in the study, as students; but ordinarily men do not think of it. The assessment is made, (and it is generally about twenty per cent. more than it was last year), and they say, "We have got to pay that." It is the custom to pay the taxes that are levied, or to dodge them, one of the two; and they do not reason upon it. There is a standard of action in the matter, and men recognize it, and yield to it without reasoning. There is a standard of duty in every part of life under laws and institutions; and you get your notion of that standard, not as a philosophic idea, but simply as a course of conduct—as a thing to be done.

Then there is another life. We have a social life, a neighborhood life, a business life, a civil life; and we have besides these a religious life. As if there were, outside of everything else that man does or thinks of from day to day a sphere different from all others, called "the religious sphere"! That sphere is made up of doctrines and ordinances; it has its usages; and there is belonging to it a whole apparatus of instrumentalities.

Now, religion is a life of itself. It is doing right to God, and it is doing right to men. The way to do right to God is to treat men as your brethren. Your duty toward God includes your duties toward men. It includes love, and hope, and joy, as far forth as you can apply them to an unseen, unformed, unimaginable Being. To a grand comprehensive Center of wisdom and goodness we send up our aspiration or supplication or gratitude; but the practical development of love to God is that which we do for his household. He says so. In other words, he says, "You treat me as you treat your fellow-men. I know whether you love me or not by the way you treat your fellow-men. If you oppress men, if you imprison them, if you neglect them when they are in trouble, if you cheat them, if you hurt them in any way, you do the same to me. If, on the other hand, you are merciful and tender and gentle; if, going to the altar, and remembering

that some one has an offense against you, you leave your prayer and your sacrifice and go and become reconciled him ; if you treat men with charity, then you do that to me." In other words, the way we worship God practically is the way we treat our fellow-men.

Nevertheless, there is a large ecclesiastical world in which there are rules and regulations ; but this is artificial, and I mention these things to show the excessive tendency of men to multiply spheres, and in each sphere to multiply the standards of right and wrong, and the need there is that every man should have a generic idea or standard which shall be applied to his life, carrying and making an application of it to all the different spheres in which he is to act.

Now, one of the consequences of this state of facts (for I have been evolving facts, stating things as they are), is, that men have contradictory standards. They have their ideal moral standards ; and these are continually at variance with each other. We are taught that all men are depraved and wicked from their birth ; and if I should preach that it is not so, and I happened to be a Presbyterian (as I am not) I should be hauled before the Presbytery very quick ; and a discussion would arise, and nine men out of every ten of that body would vote that I ought to be silenced because I did not believe in the depravity of man, and that he was wicked from birth. But every one of these men will go right home, and say, " Well, there is an angel " (speaking of his wife) ; and, " Was there ever a more exquisite flower than this ? " (speaking of his daughter, that is growing up). Every one of them would thank God for this child or for that babe. No words are adequate to express their satisfaction when they go into their families and look at their children and their companions in the light of love. Their households are perfect enough and dear enough for them. When they talk generically of men in the sanctuary they apply to them the theological standard ; but when they talk of them individually in their own houses, they apply to them the love standard. In the former case they look upon them as wicked and depraved, and in the latter case they look upon them as sweet and delightful and good.



"Man never can," we are told, "do anything that is right;" and yet the very men who will not settle a minister because he says a man can do something that is right will go to New York and hear of the case of a man who, seeing a great steamer wrecked in the bay, hovers around her with his boat night and day, and wears himself out in endeavoring to rescue the unfortunate persons on board, and saves many lives; and there is not one of these men, notwithstanding his rigorous theological standard, if he has a flea's heart in him, who will not subscribe toward a testimonial to this man for what he calls his noble and generous deed. He is a hero in the estimation of the very men who say that no man can do anything right before God. They have one standard by which to judge men practically, and another standard by which to judge them theoretically.

I preach a sermon in the house of God on disinterested benevolence; and the father and mother, on going home, say, "I wish James had been there. He's just going into life, and if he had heard that sermon I think it would have done him good all his life long." It is wholesome to bring up children to be benevolent; but to-morrow the man goes to New York, and there comes up the settlement of a debtor's estate, and five or six creditors get together, and, like so many—no matter what—pull and haul against each other; and what becomes of the poor fellow in the middle? Nobody cares for him. You say to them, "Is it right? Is it humane?" "Well, now," they say, "business is business. You can't introduce moral standards here." The man who on Sunday believed in ideal manhood in a practical case on Monday not only does not believe in it, but he DOES NOT believe in it. Something in him tells him that there are different standards for different places; or, that there are different ways of applying standards in different spheres of life.

So, I have been told by men, "You do very well for a minister; it is eminently proper that you should preach these things; they ought to be preached; but really, if you were in our places, you would do as we do." Says the lawyer, "If you were in my situation;" says the doctor, "If you were circumstanced as I am;" says the editor, "If you knew

what I have to go through with ;” says the merchant, “ If you knew what shark’s teeth I have to protect myself against —if you knew what competitions there are in my department of trade.” So, all through life, while men agree to great moral standards of character and duty ; while, on Sunday and in the Lecture-Room, they consent to these moral standards ; while they accept generic rules of conduct,—each man, speaking from his consciousness and reason and moral sense, declares that in his sphere of life another standard is demanded. And often he is correct ; for not unfrequently what is right in one sphere is not right in another.

Men say, “ Rectitude and truth never change ;” but there was never anything that changes so much. You might as well say that a printer’s case of type never changes. It is true that if there is anything that is unchangeable, it is those types. They are solid metal, and you cannot change them. But can you not change their combinations ? Can you not change what they will spell out and mean ? The elementary thing is not changeable ; but the thing you come to when you apply it to uses through an infinite scale,—is not that changeable ?

The fact is, right and wrong are so various that it requires an extraordinary genius to determine them where custom has not pre-determined them. Right and wrong will change with circumstances which require new applications. For instance, humanity in one age is not humanity in another. Mercy in one set of circumstances is not mercy in another. I will take a familiar case to show that while great moral ideas,—such as truth, justice, rectitude and humanity,—are constant, yet what is humane, what is right, what is just, and what is true, change. The applications of them change incessantly.

When men low in savage life were attacked by a horde of neighboring savages that meant to exterminate and destroy them, they defended their huts, their wives and their children ; and in doing so they not only beat off the enemy, and defeated them, but they took captive hundreds of them. And then they said, “ What shall we do with them ?” They were too poor, as a community, and too low down, to put

them in jail, and feed them ; and it would not do to let them go, because they would add to the power of those who were inimical to them ; so they determined to put them to death ; and we believe that they did right. It is the instinct of self-preservation that says, when society is in its lowest and rudest state, "They have attacked us ; they have forfeited their lives, and it is right to kill them." That is the law of defense which is appropriate between men where society is in its rudimentary state ; but is that standard of judgment which was right as applied to men in their early nascent condition right for us ? By no means. As society grows, men become stronger, and new standards are adopted. There are various influences which help men to grow. War is one of them. It makes strength fertile. There is no other heresy that is so bad as that of laziness ; and wars are contrary to laziness. As men grow, from various causes, society becomes more complex, and the rules of war change. Where there has been an advance beyond the primary stages of human development, and men take prisoners, they say, "We can watch over these fellows, and make them do our hoeing for us, instead of doing it ourselves. We will not kill them, but we will use them." So they put them in slavery ; and that is a great amelioration to what would have taken place fifty years before. Then they would have tomahawked them. Now they say, "Instead of putting them to death we can afford to have mercy on them ; we can safely permit them to live ; and we will set them to work in our potato and corn fields."

In the early stages of society, there was scarcely more than the thickness of a sheet of paper between one class and another ; slaves and their masters were not separated more than an inch : but by gradual development one class has been going higher and higher and leaving another class low down.

Then came the idea of redeeming one's self from slavery. Then came, in times of war, the exchange of prisoners. Then came the returning of men after war without exchange. And then came humane treatment during captivity. The humanities of war have been multiplied as its destructiveness has increased.



Now, with all these stages of growth and development, the standard of right and wrong has varied. At a certain period of barbaric society, it was right for men to cut off the heads of their enemies; but it would not be right for us to do it. Our standard is not the standard of centuries ago. It was humane to do it then, but it would be cruel to do it now. The law of self-preservation made it necessary at that time, but it does not make it necessary in our day. Humanity remains, but what is humane changes perpetually.

That which is illustrated by these examples is going on in every form of society. Things that were right a thousand years ago have ceased to be right now. Under the feudal system, certain obligations were laid upon the nobleman which do not lie upon him now. Certain rights belonged to the servant under feudal bondage that the freeman cannot claim. If a man belongs to a master, and may not move off at his will; if he is the abject servant of a lord who lives in a castle, he has a right to say to that lord, "You must look after me, and defend me, and feed me, as the condition on which I shall be able to render you any service." But in America, where there is no lord, no castle, and no feudal service, a man has no right to say, "Society owes me a living." Society never owed any fool a living. Society says back to him, "Earn your living. They that will not work shall not eat." That is the short way to the grave for a fellow that is lazy!

Now, to adopt moral standards under conditions where society is so large, and where there are so many spheres in society, and where in each sphere the application varies necessarily and rightly, it requires not only that a man should have great clarity of intellect, but that he should have moral genius.

We talk about geniuses. We mean by a genius a man who, in any direction, has such a cerebral development that there is automatic activity in his mind. Some men are simply recipients of impressions; some men in a feeble degree receive and give impressions; some men are stored full of powers which they do not use: but there are men who have such vitality and development of mind that they think,

that they produce results, that they make music or poetry, that they invent. They have an inspiration which they do not go out for, but which breathes itself into them, or descends upon them from the open air. They find themselves ridden by certain thoughts and impulses. Such, in a limited form, is genius ; and where in a man it is generic, and covers any considerable department of the mind, he is a genius to that extent. Mozart was a genius in music, and Beethoven was another. There are geniuses in art, and geniuses in oratory, as well as geniuses in poetry and music and invention. There have been geniuses in legislation ; but a genius in legislation is the rarest genius that ever came into the world. In other words, the power to perceive all the relations of mind in their various spheres, and to adapt a moral standard to each of those spheres, requires such a capacity of intellect, and such a power of determining what is just between man and man, as does not come to a person once in a thousand years. I could count on my hand all the great legislators of the globe, beginning with Moses. And if this be so rare a genius—the power of intellect, the discrimination, the moral inventiveness by which the difference of circumstances determines the difference of duty—how impossible it is that men can ordinarily judge for themselves.

What, then, shall we do ? Here we have the laws of God, as they are called,—and by these we mean Bible laws ; but Bible laws are themselves only the echoes of the same laws in nature. Great men caught the sound, and expressed it in words ; but the sound was rolling forth from the lips of God, and through sphere after sphere. God's will was the law of the universe ; and holy men of old, inspired, caught here and there parts of it, and put it into the record for men to learn : but the greater law, or the larger expression of the same law, yet lies outside of the book and outside of human expression. There are the laws of God ; there are the laws of social life ; there are the laws of business ; there are the laws of politics ; there are the laws of art ; and men are living with an imperfect perception of all these elements. In the first place, there are conditions which are changing the applications of them ; and men are without the capacity to

tell what ought to be right here, what ought to be right there, what ought to be just here, and what ought to be just there. Such is the condition of things.

Now I come back to my text. That which the Saviour taught, and which Paul, above all other writers of his age, sought to teach, was that righteousness, right conduct toward men, was the evidence of love to God; and that the problem of life was to learn how to adapt this principle to the different spheres of action—especially in those changing conditions in which spiritual elements were to be substituted for religion or ritualistic service; and this was the rule that was given: under all administrations and in all circumstances, he who loves fulfills the law.

“Love is the fulfilling of the law.”

In other words, in all the attempts of men to adjudicate, to administer, to apply great truths or great standards, let it be borne in mind that no man can determine what is right and wrong in his particular condition unless he is fully in a state of benevolence which makes him a really earnest desirer of the welfare of every living creature. A moral standard used in any other spirit than that may be right and may be wrong; but whether it be right or wrong, you can have no guarantee and no certainty. Moral standards which shall be adaptable to new or changing circumstances demand that they should be used in the one master-spirit of love. He who has that spirit is by it brought nearer to God, and has received something of that divine prophetic power by which he can discern things right and wrong. Love has in it no harm to one's neighbor. No matter what your standard is, and no matter what the relations are, it is from this one infallible spirit that all your applications must spring. There is to be a soul that moves toward men of every class and condition and nature and character with benefaction; with a desire for their growth, for their good, and for their happiness. If you possess that spirit, you will have the power to determine right and wrong and duty in all the emergencies and in all the circumstances of life; but unless you possess that spirit you will not have such power.

Now, in the first place, in closing this morning, let me



say that the infinite number of questions which you are constantly determining, individually and personally, require that you should be in the state of mind which I have described, in order to determine what is right and what is wrong. Parents fulfill this condition in regard to their children, with the exception of passionate people who cuff their ears first and afterwards wish they had not done it. All deliberate and wise conduct on the part of parents toward their children springs from love—from a desire to do them good. And the family is the best part of human society. There is mother wit and mother wisdom—and the difference between mother wit and mother wisdom and man wit and man wisdom is simply the difference in the affection that exists. The mother's is specific and personal. Sometimes women lose their children and adopt everybody else's—feeling that their life is dedicated to little children; and they go and labor in foundling institutions and orphan asylums. Then it is not special love, but generic.

And out of that sense of love and kind-wishing come all questions as to what one ought to do to his neighbor.

I once lived by the side of a very excellent man who, nevertheless, had his infirmities—which, of course, surprised me! and I recollect an occasion on which he became angry, and manifested his displeasure in a very striking manner. I, wanting a place to hang up a dipper in my yard, drove a nail into the fence between him and me, which went through on the other side. One day I heard a racket in my yard, and looking to see what was the occasion of it, I found my dipper ringing over the pavement. This man had got a hammer, and hit the nail a rap, and sent the nail, dipper and everything else flying. My first feeling was to fire the dipper over at him, and give him as good as he sent: but my second thought was, "Well, that man is made so, I suppose; he is a passionate man by nature; he was taken by surprise; he is a very good fellow, a kind neighbor, and I won't say anything about it. I was going to be satisfied so; but then I said, "I guess I had better say something to him," and I stepped in and said, "I ask your pardon, sir. It was thoughtless, my driving that nail through the fence, and I

am glad you reminded me of it." He shook hands with me, and said, "Well, well, well, let us not say anything more about that." The result showed the wisdom of treating the matter in a spirit of simple kindness. It was evidently the course of conduct which was best for him.

Now, every day, ten thousand grievances come up in your life, ten thousand annoying things are said to you, ten thousand little stories are told about you; and what is it best for you to do in regard to these things? To say, "He said that, did he? I know something about that man, and when I get a good chance I guess he will find it out"—is that wisdom? Is that the way to apply the law of duty? Is that acting according to the divine standard? Do you love that man? Can you go down on your knees to-night before Jesus and mention that man's name, and repeat it till you are conscious that your heart shines, and then say, "Lord, what can I do to help him? Bless him; shield him." If anybody undertakes to tell you anything about him, do not listen to it. Shut the ear-gate. Do not be an entertainer of contraband news. "Do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, that you may be children of your Father which is in heaven." Seek that never-failing source of judgment, that standard by which right and wrong can be determined in the parliament of the soul, and can be wisely applied to the various emergencies of life. Wait on the Lord till your soul is as pure and gentle and kind toward that man in the sight of God as God's soul is toward you. Then ask yourself, "What shall I do?"—and you will be in a condition to apply this standard with any modifications which may be proper under the existing circumstances.

No justice is just that does not spring from kindness. No administration is just that economizes society and gets rid of trouble, but ruins men needlessly. No law is just that does not carry the spirit of good will to every human creature. No institution of penalty, no Sing Sing or Auburn, no prison of any kind, is just in which men are treated other than as the redeemed of the Lord. Not the man at the anvil, not the maker of shoes, not he who works at the cooper's trade, not the tanner, not the hatter, not any

man in the lower walks of life alone, am I pleading for; but for every man, though he be a burglar, though he be guilty of arson, though his crime be murder. Whatever may be his condition, no matter what he has done, he is a *man*, he is an expectant of eternal life, and God bears with him, God has compassion on him, and shall not you?

If you have a rigorous sense of justice which shuts with a snap, like sharks' teeth, and you say of a man who is punished for doing wrong, "It serves him right; he has made others suffer, and he ought to suffer himself!" can that be a right interpretation of the standard of justice? Not until you have thought of that man in the light of God's countenance, and in the light of eternity; not until he comes to your consciousness as one of God's creatures for whom Christ died, and as your brother,—not until then have you a right to apply a standard of duty to him.

Love, which "is the fulfilling of the law," means and perpetuates no harm to any man; and if you wish to know what your duty is in the family, in business, as a citizen, and in the administration of justice, remember that you cannot tell what it is until you have risen into that serene sympathetic and divine mood out of which comes the wisdom of the universe, and which is to rule here and hereafter.

We are pigmies. We are rude and crude creatures of the dust. In one sense, we are worms yet. And the way in which men manage themselves and their fellows; the blundering accumulations which we call society; the methods of administration which are employed in it,—these must cause the angels to weep. They must be grieved beyond expression to see the way in which we work, as compared with that bright, beneficent, sweet-souled way in which God administers justice. Says God, "Whom I love I chasten, and scourge every son whom I receive. "Be ye therefore perfect"—no, no, not perfect? "Be ye therefore perfect"—oh, no, not *perfect*? "Be ye therefore perfect"—*as your Father is.*" And how is he perfect? "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." That is the kind of perfection that we are to have. May God grant it to us!



## PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

O GOD, we rejoice in thee. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth, from everlasting to everlasting thou art God.

It is thy greatness in time and duration, thine infinite wisdom, thy goodness which is a part of that wisdom, and thy power that makes thy will of wisdom and thy will of goodness effectual everywhere, through all time, and to all eternity, that gives us confidence and trust in thee. For how weak are men! What shadows, indeed, they are, flitting across the earth, and leaving no impression upon it. How poor is human life! How little it attempts, and even less accomplishes! How much are men creatures of accident, and swept by surrounding influences, straitening up with no will of their own, bestormed and faint for the hour, and with the hour swept away. If only in human thought and in human will and foresight there were confidence for time and the earth, how vain were life, how utterly poor and impoverished! But thou art God; thou dost think for thinkers; and men are following influences they know not of. And all is not vain that seems shadowy, nor transient because it passes quickly away.

Thou art the Architect, not of the heaven and the earth alone, but of men, and of that great universe of living creatures to which man belongs. Thou art a God to whom yesterday and to-day and forever are one. Thou lookest upon a thousand years as upon yesterday when it is past. And what infiniteness there is in thy thought and plan! What undiscovered regions toward which blindly, though they be divinely impelled, men are moved, we know not, nor by searching can we find out; but we rejoice that there is this imperial power over time and life.

We rejoice that thou hast so far drawn the vail, and disclosed to us the future, that now we know that there is a life beyond. We are growing toward something and out of something.

We are spending and wasting things which are needful for this being, but which will be unnecessary for the being that is to come; and thou art, by this very spending and wasting, educating us in higher things and for higher ranges of life; and the hope, the conviction of that, redeems life. There can be no night to those who are moved on towards eternal day, where God is the sun. There can be no sorrow to those who hear thee say: All things work together for good to them that love God. There can be no disappointments, no infirmities, nor even any sins, that do not bear blessings to those who believe that thou art, by sorrow and by chastisement of sin and sorrow, fashioning and preparing us for a nobler being in the world to come.

Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. Oh, may those doubts which have made our hands feeble disappear. May we have strength to stand, and strength to execute, in the full faith that though we are blind, God sees all things, and that though we are judging and misjudging upon

the narrow pattern of earthly standards, thou who art judging upon the cycles of eternity art making no mistakes. Let not our trust be in our wisdom, nor even in our understanding of how thou wilt bring to pass good from evil, but in our thought of thee as thou art supremely excellent, doing all things by the counsel of thine own will, infinitely lifted up above all counsellors, knowing in thyself, and infusing into us all that we know—the Fountain of human life, of human feeling, and of human wisdom.

And grant, we beseech thee, that thus we may walk by the strength of God day by day. May we in time of the storm have thee as a pavilion where thou shalt hide us until the storm be over-past.

When pursued by misfortunes, may we have thee as a tower where thou wilt defend us. May we have thee everywhere, when wandering homeless, forsaken, alone and discouraged, and say: In my Father's house are many apartments.

Grant, we pray thee, that we may have thus the heritage, the faith of our Father's love, and power, and wisdom, and presence. May we have faith, also, that all things in the end shall praise thee and rejoice us.

We pray that thou wilt grant that these truths, which come to us in hours and days appointed, may never depart from us; so that in the battle of life, and in the friction of every day experience, we may not be left to our baser natures, to our lower thoughts and to the interpretations of men. May we carry with us the supereminent wisdom of God, and learn to see all things as thou dost see them, and so walk securely and blessedly, whether it shine or whether it gloom, or whatever may be the experience of life.

We pray that thou wilt bless those who are in thy presence—each one as he severally needs. Give to us the greatest of all blessings, the in-bearing of the consciousness of God present with each, to love, and in love to discipline, to educate, to perfect.

Grant that every one in thy presence who is bearing burdens may hear thee saying: Cast thy burdens on the Lord. May those who have care in over-measure, or those who are met with its sharp edges, cast their care on him that careth for them. May they have that faith which works by love; and so may they overcome the world, and all that is adverse to thee.

We pray that thou wilt by these heavenly hopes and heavenly faiths join us more and more patiently to our tasks and our duties. May we not pick and select for ourselves. The servant is not above the master. Shalt thou be crowned with thorns, and we never be touched with the spine or the thorn? Shalt thou be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and shall we feel ourselves to be injured and oppressed when troubles come? May we rejoice to suffer with Christ. May we rejoice to be able, through Christ who strengtheneth us, to do all things, and to bear all things.

Carry, we beseech thee, the sweetness of thy love, the consolation of thy providence, and the faith of thy presence, into every household. Bring light where there is darkness, reclamation where there is wandering, gentleness where hardness prevails, knowledge

where the mind is blinded by unbelief, mercy where there is obduracy and cruelty, and meekness where there is haughtiness. Grant that men may be united to each other in all the affinities of God.

May thy blessing rest upon this church in its corporate capacity. Bless all the members in their several relations and duties in life. Remember all those avenues through which we are endeavoring to diffuse the knowledge of truth and the spirit of Christ Jesus. Bless our schools, and all who are gathered and grouped about them. Bless both the scholars and the households from which they come forth. May the teachers be the disciples of Christ, taught of God, not in the letter, but in the spirit of the Gospel. May the officers and superintendents be prepared for this great work by the indwelling Spirit.

We pray for all the churches of this city, and for all the pastors of them. We pray that they may be more and more strengthened to discern and to do the work of God which has been committed to their trust.

Bless the great city near to us in its varied interests. We pray for the President of the United States, and for those who are joined with him in authority; for the Congress assembled; for all courts and magistrates; and for the legislatures in the various States of this great Union. We pray for colleges and schools. We thank thee for books, for newspapers, for all the instrumentalities by which knowledge is sent forth to the great people.

We pray that thou wilt bless this whole land, and all its vast means not only for the diffusion of knowledge, but for the maintenance of rectitude and justice.

Bless with us the nations of the earth in the things in which they are in need, and in the states to which they have come in civilization. Grant that they may have from thee adequate strength for their special necessities.

We pray that thus thou wilt continue to advance the race of man toward the fulfillment of those great and precious promises on which we have relied, for which we have waited, and which shall be accomplished when the whole earth shall be thine, and the new heaven and the new earth in which dwelleth righteousness shall come.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit.  
*Amen.*

## PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

OUR Father, we pray thee that thou wilt bless the word of truth. May it more and more dwell in our thought. More and more may it appeal to our understanding, to our moral sense, to our affections, and to all our sympathies. May it influence our whole conduct in life. We know how poor we are. We are conscious of our poverty in thought and feeling and wisdom. We know that when we puff ourselves up there is little in us. We know that thou must look with infinite and continuous pity upon us in our inferiority. Grant that we may come more and more into that spirit which springs from true love to God and man, and that out of that may come inspirations which shall teach us our duty, and teach us how to employ all the standards of duty in their infinite perplexing applications to all the spheres and emergencies of life, and bring us at last home—oh, bring us at last home—strangers no more, not foreigners, all brothers, none lost, all found and brought back by the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit.  
*Amen.*



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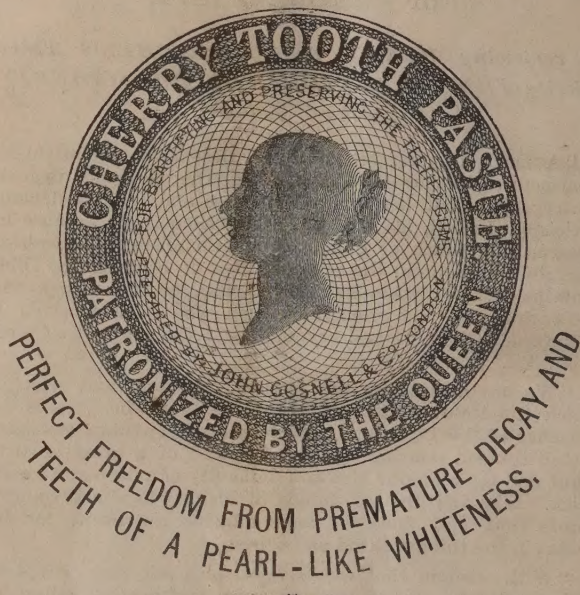
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